

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 28, 2013

Dear Farm Bill Conferees,

We are writing to express our support for preventing harmful cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in the Farm Bill. SNAP is our nation's first line of defense against hunger. SNAP provides essential nutrition benefits to working families, children, senior citizens, and disabled individuals in every state and town in our country. Every dollar in new SNAP benefits generates up to \$1.79 in economic activity, of which approximately 16 cents goes back to the farmers.

While we support efforts to improve the integrity of the SNAP program, we encourage conferees to reject all SNAP eligibility changes designed to erect new barriers to participation, preventing millions of seniors, children and families from accessing food assistance. The eligibility changes also will mean an additional 280,000 children would lose free school meals because children in SNAP households are automatically eligible for school meals. Changes would also increase administrative costs by requiring states to re-determine eligibility for SNAP, even if a household was deemed eligible for other state and/or federal assistance programs.

SNAP plays a critical role at a stressful time in the life of families. It allows struggling families to put groceries on their tables when they face financial troubles. Benefits average less than \$1.50 per individual, per meal, and within this limited budget they struggle to provide healthy, nutritious meals for themselves and their family. In fact half of SNAP participants entering the program are enrolled for 10 months or less.

Researchers estimate that half of all American children will receive SNAP at some point during childhood, and half of all adults will do so at some point between the ages of 20 and 65 years. Furthermore, SNAP recipients are diverse with regards to race-ethnicity, many have earned income, and the vast majority of SNAP households do not receive cash welfare benefits.

SNAP is a safety net program in the truest sense of the world; there is no other more fundamental human need than food. Please consider the needs of these struggling families, children, and senior citizens as you negotiate the final Farm Bill and the future of the SNAP program.